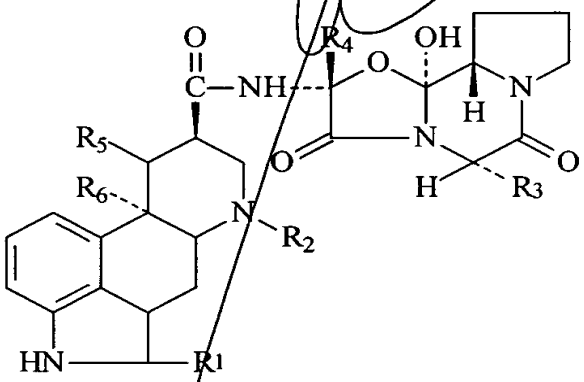
What is Claimed is:

1. A method of improving bioavailability of ergot derivatives administered using sustained-release delivery systems comprising combining an ergot derivative or mixture thereof with a pharmaceutically acceptable hydrophilic swelling agent or mixture thereof and one or more pharmaceutically acceptable excipients.

2. The method according to Claim 1, wherein the bioavailability is at least equal to the bioavailability of the ergot derivative or mixture thereof administered using a conventional drug delivery system.

3. The method according to Claim 1, wherein the bioavailability is at least 25% higher than the bioavailability of the ergot derivative or mixture thereof administered using a conventional drug delivery system.

4. The method according to Claim 2, wherein the ergot derivative has the formula



(I)

wherein

R_1 is hydrogen or halogen,

R_2 is hydrogen or C_1-C_4 alkyl,

R_3 is isopropyl, sec.-butyl, isobutyl or benzyl,

R_4 is methyl, ethyl, isopropyl, and mixtures thereof, and either

R_5 is hydrogen and

R_6 is hydrogen or methoxy, or

R_5 and R_6 together is an additional bond, and mixtures thereof.

5. The method according to Claim 4, wherein the ergot derivative is α-dihydroergocryptine.

6. The method according to Claim 1, wherein the hydrophilic swelling agent is selected from the group consisting of methylcellulose, carboxymethylcellulose, hydroxypropylmethylcellulose, polyvinyl alcohols, polyoxyethylene glycols and poloxamers and mixtures thereof.

7. The method according to Claim 1, wherein the one or more pharmaceutically acceptable excipients is selected from the group consisting of lubricants, suspending agents, binders, diluents, flavorants, colorants, dispersing agents and wetting agents.

8. The method according to Claim 1, wherein the ratio of ergot derivative to hydrophilic swelling agent is about 1:0.5 to about 1:10.

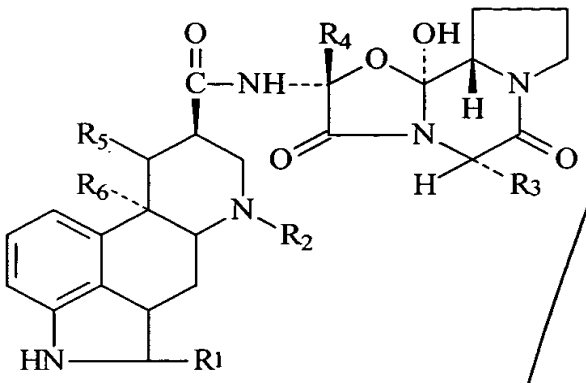
9. The method according to Claim 5, wherein the ratio of α-dihydroergocryptine to hydrophilic swelling agent is about 1:0.5 to about 1:5.

10. The method according to Claim 1, wherein about 5 to about 80 mg of ergot derivative is combined.

11. A sustained-release pharmaceutical composition comprising:
an ergot derivative or mixture thereof;
a pharmaceutically acceptable swelling agent or mixture thereof; and
one or more pharmaceutically acceptable excipients;
said composition having a bioavailability at least equal to the bioavailability of the ergot derivative or mixture thereof administered using a conventional drug delivery system.

12. The composition according to Claim 11, wherein the bioavailability is at least 25% higher than the bioavailabilty of the ergot derivative or mixture thereof administered using a conventional drug delivery system.

13. The composition according to Claim 11, wherein the ergot derivative has the formula



(I)

wherein

R_1 is hydrogen or halogen,

R_2 is hydrogen or $C_1 - C_4$ alkyl,

R_3 is isopropyl, sec.-butyl, isobutyl or benzyl,

R_4 is methyl, ethyl, isopropyl, and mixtures thereof, and either

R_5 is hydrogen and

R_6 is hydrogen or methoxy, or

R_5 and R_6 together is an additional bond, and mixtures thereof.

14. The composition according to Claim 13, wherein the ergot derivative is α-dihydroergocryptine.

15. The composition according to Claim 11, wherein the hydrophilic swelling agent is selected from the group consisting of methylcellulose, carboxymethylcellulose, hydroxypropylmethylcellulose, polyvinyl alcohols, polyoxyethylene glycols and poloxamers and mixtures thereof.

16. The composition according to Claim 11, wherein the one or more pharmaceutically acceptable excipients is selected from the group consisting of lubricants, suspending agents, binders, diluents, flavorants, colorants, dispersing agents and wetting agents.

17. The composition according to Claim 11, wherein the ratio of ergot derivative to hydrophilic swelling agent is about 1:0.5 to about 1:10.

18. The composition according to Claim 14, wherein the ratio of α-dihydroergocryptine to hydrophilic swelling agent is about 1:0.5 to about 1:5.

19. The composition according to Claim 11, wherein the ergot derivative is present in the amount of about 5 to about 80 mg.

add A7

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